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ABSTRACT

The liberal bias of the "St. Louis Post-Dispatch" has been well-documented, but memoranda between editor-publisher Joseph Pulitzer II and two of his key editors, Julius Klyman and Irving Dilliard, reveal a tug-of-war over the newspaper's liberal treatment of communism from 1940 to 1955. Klyman, editor of the "Pictures" magazine, was a labor activist who disavowed all suspicions that he was a communist. Pulitzer objected to Klyman's emphasis on class struggle and the virtues of non-capitalist economies but believed Klyman was too good a picture editor to be fired or transferred. Dilliard, who edited the editorial page, differed with Pulitzer over interpretation of the First Amendment and application of Constitutional guarantees to the threat of communist subversion. During the Joseph McCarthy era, Pulitzer felt that Dilliard gave the senator an incessant drubbing in the editorial pages. However, Pulitzer respected Dilliard too much to fire him. Pulitzer's attempts to curb both Klyman and Dilliard by assigning people to closely supervise their work was only partly successful. (Thirty-two notes are included.) (MHC)

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History Division

THE *ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH* DEBATE OVER COMMUNISM, 1940-1955

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THE *ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH* DEBATE OVER COMMUNISM, 1940-1955

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In *Inside U.S.A.*, published in 1947, John Gunther described the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "a Pulitzer property and baronial in management," as "probably the most effective liberal newspaper in the United States." Gunther complimented the newspaper for helping to make St. Louis "a great town for civil liberties" whose "intellectual climate is almost all that a civilized person can ask. Among other things, he credited the newspaper with having "reported and interpreted the Russian Revolution as intelligently as possible" and described St. Louis as "the town where Communists speak on Twelfth Street with police protection, and where the liberal press insists that [far right extremist] Gerald L. K. Smith has a perfect right to hold a mass meeting."[1]

The liberal bias of the *Post-Dispatch* is well-documented,[2] but some of the intellectual interactions which produced the news and editorial columns of the newspaper were less unified than the use of that label suggests, particularly when it comes to the issue of communism between 1940 and 1955. This is borne out in memoranda between Joseph Pulitzer II, the "baron" of Gunther's reference, who had inherited the editor-publisher position on the death of his famous father in 1911, and two of his key editorial lieutenants. Pulitzer, who was described by Richard G. Baumhoff, long-time *Post-Dispatch* reporter who became one of the publisher's administrative aides, as "middle-of-the road, maybe slightly on the conservative side,"[3] frequently found himself at odds during those years with pictorial section editor Julius H. Klyman and editorial writer and then editorial page editor Irving Dilliard, both of whom spent most of their working lives on the *Post-Dispatch*.

This could not, however, be characterized as a liberal-conservative clash; it was a more subtly complicated difference of opinion about the appropriate presentation of the issue in the newspaper. Not surprisingly, this debate seems to have derived from varied readings of the underlying social and political tensions out of which anti-communist sentiment developed. It was influenced as well by differences about application of the *Post-Dispatch* platform, a commitment to social and political justice and fair play which has been the paper's editorial touchstone since it was written by the first Joseph Pulitzer in 1907. This episode qualifies as a study of freedom and equity in journalism because of what it reveals about the innerworkings of news and editorial policymaking in one of the country's most important daily newspapers.

I. Julius Klyman

The approach of Joseph Pulitzer II to the problem began to surface in his dealings with Klyman, whose *Post-Dispatch* PICTURES section was favorably compared to *Life* and the *New York Times* magazines. In addition to being a superb photo-editor, Klyman was a labor activist who some, including his publisher, suspected of being a Communist. The evidence was all circumstantial, having largely to do with Klyman's labor union activities and his unstoppable persistence in trying to get class-conscious topics into the *Post-Dispatch*. He had joined the newspaper as a reporter in 1922. By the early forties, he had been vice president of the American Newspaper Guild and remained one of the most active members of its St. Louis unit. He also at that time was a member of the state executive committee of the Missouri Congress of Industrial Organizations and chairman of the Missouri-Kansas CIO Political Action Committee and belonged to the St. Louis Industrial Council.[4]

Marxists and Marxism interested Klyman intensely. In 1937 and 1940, he had gotten two interviews for the *Post-Dispatch* with Leon Trotsky, the exiled anti-Stalinist Russian revolutionary who had been a collaborator of Lenin's. "Trotsky lived and died a dissenter,"[5] he wrote. He might have been describing himself.

Before elevating him to the PICTURES editorship in 1944, Pulitzer had a long talk with Klyman to impress upon him his belief that editors should be "monastic" and not take an active part in any outside activities that might have even the appearance of compromising the paper's editorial independence. In recognizing the publisher's authority "to expect nonparticipation in outside movements," Klyman said it was his "guess that if one could express himself through his regular professional channels, the urge to express himself in extra-curricular fashion would no longer exist." Although that statement contained the seeds of a series of painful future annoyances for Pulitzer, it satisfied him at the time. The publisher did try to nail down the Communist allegation more definitely, although before asking, "Are you a Communist?" he told Klyman to feel free not to answer if he wished. Klyman responded that Pulitzer had asked that question two years earlier, that he had replied negatively then and that that "still was the correct answer." He said he had often heard the charge, but "didn't know how to stop a few people from making accusations against me and I didn't see that it mattered much."[6]

So it went. Pulitzer and many others considered Klyman unusually gifted in his work, but the suspicion did not disappear. What continued to rankle the publisher was that PICTURES seemed overly weighted toward issues of economic inequality, frequently in the form of commentary on the economic arrangements of various non-capitalist countries. In advising Managing Editor Benjamin H. Reese to "keep a sharp eye on J. K.'s sociological convictions and his desire to do something about them," Pulitzer observed: "To be sure the

[*Post-Dispatch*] platform says: 'never lack sympathy with the poor,' but I submit that Pictures was not intended primarily for that purpose but was originally issued as a substitute for the old Sunday magazine and rotogravure picture sections, intended primarily to entertain, divert and interest the reader."[7] He then tried gently to make the same point to Klyman: "I think that in your enthusiasm to develop the full possibilities of pictorial journalism and in your search for the significant, serious and the important . . . you are perhaps a little too prone to overbalance the section with the serious type of feature. Let me say that in my own case . . . I am always looking forward to finding something that is distracting or relaxing or . . . in one way or another, pleasant to read."[8]

When that didn't produce the desired results, Pulitzer asked Klyman to bring his PICTURES file to him "and let me go over it with you with a view to determining how often you have run what, for lack of a better term, we might call these 'class struggle' pages."[9] When this failed, he assigned Reese in May, 1947

> to assume personal responsibility for the objectivity of text, underlines and heads of stories appearing in PICTURES which concern themselves in any way with labor. If I ever saw UNOBJECTIVE writing I find it in the underlines of the page of . . . drawings of Senators, Sunday, May 4, and in the text. The whole thing impresses me as a most naive revelation of pro-labor bias. I cannot escape the conclusion that the purpose underlying this publication was plainly to smear all those who are demanding stiff labor legislation, to label them as right-wingers, or members of the "Old Guard" and to identify all those in opposition as "progressives," "liberals," or "moderates."
>
> The whole thing involves nice questions of phrasing, construction, qualifications and emphasis. Written as they are, they add up to support the serious charge I've made of unobjective writing.[10]

Reese's oversight slowed Klyman only briefly. By autumn of 1947 Pulitzer concluded that it was futile to expect him to change. Between August and October PICTURES had carried four layouts on various European and Asian countries which Pulitzer considered slanted. For example, in the presentation on Yugoslavia, he wrote Reese, "it is crystal-clear to me that the editor was trying to make the contrast between the old and admittedly backward condition of . . . Yugoslavia under the old regime with the fact that everything is really grand and glorious under the new communist setup." As for Portugal, "I was amused to observe that . . . the story informs us that it is ruled by a dictator, which, of course, is true, but never, never, never is that word dictator applied to dear old Mother Russia or any of her camp followers." Faced with Klyman's obvious inability to curb his leftist impulses, the publisher had concluded "that this kind of weasle-worded editorializing must and will be promptly eliminated."

But he would not fire or transfer Klyman, he said, because he "is too good a picture editor and has been with the paper too long."

Instead, Reese was to instruct Klyman "to omit all subjects which have anything whatever to do with social or economic conditions . . . , or of anything which deals with the conflict of the haves and the have-nots here or abroad." He realized this would "cut the very heart out of Pictures as presently constituted," and that it would "cease to be a chronicle in picture form of serious world events and again become "a purely feature magazine in picture form."[11]>

Reese was generally successful in following this directive, so much so that Klyman tried in 1949 to foil the managing editor's oversight of PICTURES. He proposed to Pulitzer that the paper run a symposium on "The Arithmetic of Capitalism" along the lines of the paper's World War II series by invited commentators of varying economic, political and social affiliations entitled "What Are We Fighting For?" "It is my opinion that despite all the ups and downs and vagaries of our economy, it can continue to work, at least as far as its arithmetic is concerned," Klyman began. "If it fails, it will do so because some of those who have the most to gain through capitalism will unwittingly sabatoge it--in other words, milk the economy when they should be feeding it," he explained, adding, "I don't share the Government's optimism concerning the immediate future of our economy."[12] Pulitzer rejected the idea.

After Reese retired in 1951--at which time the irrepressible Klyman asked to be named managing editor[13]--Reese's successor, former city editor Raymond L. Crowley, continued to police Klyman's work. "Many times in the past two years," he wrote Pulitzer in 1953, "I have thrown out whole pages or single photos, or required complete revision of textual matter in PICTURES, in order to avoid even the suspicion of bias in the direction which might be expected because of Mr. Klyman's thinking."[14] Even so, Klyman was able occasionally to sneak something by, as when Associate Editor Joseph Pulitzer III called his father's attention to a PICTURES page depicting the governmental organization of the Soviet Union. Among other things, the copy with the photos and charts reported that political candidates in Russia "are nominated by the Communist Party, collective farms, trade unions and youth organizations. All citizens over eighteen years old have the vote." What the younger Pulitzer wanted to know was: "Is not the uninformed reader entitled to know that this political organization of Russia's government is theoretical? . . . That the [Council of Ministers] in practice responds to the will of the chairman, recently the absolute dictator Stalin?"[15]

II. Irving Dilliard

During the same years as the tribulations with Klyman, differences between Pulitzer and Dilliard had developed as well. There were at least two factors which made this working relationship more complicated than that with Klyman. The first was Pulitzer's genuine respect for Dilliard's gift for editorial expression and his deep reading in history, politics, and the law of freedom of expression as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court. The second was the publisher's concern about the frequent incapacity of editorial page editor Ralph Coghlan, who was an alcoholic. Increasingly, there were times when Dilliard, as second in command of the page, had to step in for Coghlan, whose employment finally was terminated in 1948.

Time described his successor as "almost [Coghlan's] exact opposite as a personality. Sober, earnest Irving Dilliard, 44, an ex-Nieman fellow, has a schoolteacher's manner and a historian's mind."[16] Dilliard had joined the *Post-Dispatch* as a reporter in 1927 and began submitting editorials two years later. In 1930 he was invited to join the editorial page staff. He had been there under every editorial page editor the page had had, starting with George S. Johns, who had worked for the first J. P. "I know the problems of a whole series of editors who preceded me," he wrote Pulitzer in a memorandum reviewing his career which the publisher asked him to write. "It has been my purpose to apply this experience. As you know, I have stood squarely for what I thought was right as the editorial opinion of the Post-Dispatch. I yield to no one in my attachment to the principles in our founder's platform." That, he made clear, included the editor-publisher himself:

> The conduct of the page should not be and has not been out of any desire to please you as such. It has been to apply the platform. . . . This is because . . . I have recognized your authority but never forgotten my own responsibility.[17]

As that indicates, there had been some differences between them already. Their views parted particularly on questions of the application of Constitutional guarantees of civil rights and liberties--especially those of expression and religion in the First Amendment. Dilliard was decidedly an "absolutist" in those matters, much along the lines of Supreme Court Justices Hugo L. Black and William O. Douglas, both of whom he knew. They believed the First Amendment's language was an impenetrable barrier against governmental disturbance of its guarantees. In contrast, Pulitzer believed there were conditions and circumstances under which the constitutional terminology should be interpreted less one-sidedly. His approach could be described as a version of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.'s "clear and present danger" formula for drawing the line between protected and punishable speech. It is similar as well to the method of several more recent Court members who attempt to weigh free speech and other values against one another, selecting that which for them tips the balance. Absolutists think balancers are dangerously flexible in their approach

to fundamental freedoms; balancers think absolutists are unrealistically rigid in theirs.

Pulitzer's reaction to the Jehovah's Witness compulsory flag salute cases of the early 1940s points up this difference between the two men. In 1940 and again in 1943, he had complained to Coghlan about editorials agreeing with Jehovah's Witnesses who contended that compelling their children to salute the American flag in school was an unconstitutional infringement of religious freedom. The question had reached the Supreme Court. "Please . . . take me by the hand, with or without Mr. Dilliard's assistance," he directed Coghlan, "and teach me why a law requiring a child to salute the flag at the expense of being expelled from school is undemocratic. I hold very definitely to the view that that is one simple piece of good manners which the people as a whole have a right to expect from all comers, be they Masons, Baptists, Rotarians or Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . Perhaps I am hopelessly illiberal on this issue, but I'll be damned if I can see anything to it." He instructed Coghlan, unless he could persuade him otherwise, "to move gradually away from our present editorial position in this matter."[18] He was dissuaded after Coghlan pointed out that although the Court had originally taken Pulitzer's stance, it was likely to reverse itself and agree with the paper's position in an upcoming case. It did.[19]

Pulitzer and Dilliard had worked on a generally congenial basis during the time of Coghlan's worsening alcoholism, but within the first year of Dilliard's tenure as editor of the page, their relationship became more tense. More than anything else, this had to do with their differences in interpreting the application of Constitutional guarantees to the threat of Communist subversion. This became plainly evident in Pulitzer's reaction to a report Dilliard gave him at the end of 1949:

> I have read your able report on the Bill of Rights and the Communists with intense interest. In your last line you say: "It may not tell us where to draw the line but it warns us to stop on the safe side." This does not satisfy me. I want to see the line drawn. We cannot draw the statute, but cannot we promote the drawing of a statute that will draw the line? Especially so in view of the general agreement that a government has the right to protect itself against a plan or plot to overthrow it by force or violence. . . . As to the point of view that those in this country who worry about Communist plots are hysterical, I should like to ask them about France, Italy and all the rest. To laugh off the danger on the theory that we are a bigger and better country is not too convincing to me. I prefer [Supreme Court Justice Felix] Frankfurter's attitude when he refused to hire a Communist law clerk.[20]

The difference taking shape between the two men was that Pulitzer was much more certain than Dilliard that a line sufficiently protective of free expression could be drawn.

The publisher's defense of those Dilliard would label "hysterical" indicates as well that Pulitzer was much more the "Cold Warrior" than his editorial page chief. It must be noted, though, that Pulitzer's doubts about the constitutional protection of militant subversives, as well as his concern about Klyman's ideological commitments, developed against a nationwide background of intensifying worry about the threat of Communist subversion. In 1947 an executive order by President Truman required security checks of all government employees. That year the House Un-American Activities Committee began hearings on subversion, one outgrowth of which was the Alger Hiss perjury conviction on which opinion remained divided as to whether Hiss, a former State Department official, had passed secrets to the Russians. In February, 1950, U. S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, a Wisconsin Republican, began his crusade to root out Communists in government and the military. Also during this period China fell to the Communists and the Korean War began.

Against this background, Pulitzer was inclined to go slowly and was unwilling to discredit what seemed to him a substantial anti-communist public opinion. Besides that, there was counsel for editorial moderation in the existence of considerable feeling in St. Louis going back as far as the "Red Scare"" period of the 1920s that the *Post-Dispatch* was a haven for bolsheviks and fellow-travelers. There was an illustrative incident in 1946, when the competing conservative *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* had printed a photograph of the Soviet flag flying over the Twelfth Street entrance to the *Post-Dispatch* building on May 1, in accordance with the paper's policy of flying the flags of allied nations on their national holidays. The *Globe-Democrat* thought a more sinister inference could be drawn, and the *Post-Dispatch* shortly discontinued the goodwill gesture.[21] (That did not stop Senator McCarthy from waving a copy of the 1946 *Globe-Democrat* photograph before a St. Louis audience when he spoke there in 1952. "This is the only place in the City of St. Louis where you find the Communist flag being flown," he said. The *Post-Dispatch* reprinted the 1946 photograph with its account of McCarthy's speech.)[22]

For his part, Dilliard consistently rationalized his positions upon his interepretation of the language of the *Post-Dispatch* platform and the Constitution. Out of this developed a rupture with Pulitzer that never completely healed. Secure in his interpretation of the platform's "never tolerate injustice," Dilliard wrote, without consulting the publisher, a ringing denunciation of the conviction of 11 Communists in federal district court in New York in October, 1949, under provisions of the 1940 Alien Registration Act, usually called the Smith Act, after one of its congressional sponsors. That law made it illegal to belong to or join any group which taught or advocated the overthrow of any government in the United States by force or violence. The editorial contended that the Communists had been convicted under this "hysterical law" for holding political opinions protected by the First Amendment. "It is not enough to say that a man teaches and advocates overthrow and therefore so incites others that the government itself is endangered," Dilliard wrote.[23] Nothing was closer to his heart than the principle involved in this case. Furthermore, he told

Pulitzer, "any other editorial was unthinkable in the light of [the] platform and our application of it."[24]

Pulitzer could not agree. He thought the Smith Act, if interpreted to outlaw advocacy of overt acts rather than simply expressions of ideas and beliefs, was constitutional. In upholding the convictions in 1951, the Supreme Court made that distinction to his satisfaction, but not to Dilliard's. Pulitzer had construed Dilliard's 1949 editorial to have condemned outlawing any and all kinds of pro-Communist advocacy.[25] Dilliard thought that in upholding the convictions, the Supreme Court had made the same great error. And he said so--again without consulting Pulitzer, who was vacationing at the time--in a long lead editorial headed "Six Men Amend the Constitution." "Never before has such a restriction been placed on the right to hold opinions and express them in the United States of America," he wrote. "Six men have amended the United States Constitution without submitting those amendments to the states for ratification. That is the nub of this decision."[26]

Pulitzer's response on his return was to make a count of all the judges, from the trial through the Supreme Court, who had supported the convictions. "The consensus of judges, all presumably honest and intelligent men who have studied this question, appears to be ten to two," he wrote Dilliard. "Although the majority is not always right, five to one is a strong majority. This prompts me to say that if a similar or comparable case comes up I shall want to discuss it with you before we make any commitment."[27]

In reality, the two men probably were not as widely divided as the majority and minority at the Supreme Court. In a memo to Dilliard in February, 1950, Pulitzer had said he was impressed by an American Civil Liberties Union plan to seek amendment of the Smith Act "to permit teaching and advocacy but to prohibit actual preparations and plans clearly intended to lead to such acts of violence. . . . As I see it, this is the very crux of the entire matter, that is, how to draw the line between teaching and advocacy and deliberate planning for or committing acts of violence. In other words, when does a clear danger become a present danger?"[28] (In 1957, two years after Pulitzer's death, the Supreme Court explicitly wrote the distinction between abstract advocacy and advocacy of overt acts into First Amendment law.[29])

About two weeks before Pulitzer raised that question, on February 9, 1950, Senator McCarthy began his vilification campaign by waving a piece of paper before an audience in Wheeling, West Virginia, on which he said were written the names of 205 U. S. State Department employees who were known members of the Communist Party. Predictably, the Dilliard and Pulitzer responses were different. Both deplored McCarthy's methods, but Pulitzer was not at first as fully persuaded as Dilliard that the senator was an utter demagogue. He thought the charges deserved investigation "in good faith without fireworks or klieg lights on either side. The sooner the charges are proved or disproved the better off the country will be."[30] Two days after writing that, he advised Dilliard to "please go slow on Communists,

minorities, subversive groups and other phases of civil rights. . . . There is danger--in my opinion serious danger--that the impression will get around that the editorial page is thinking about civil rights and of not much else. We don't want to be regarded as a public bore. Too much is too much."[31]

McCarthy, of course, was impossible to ignore, and as his forays continued over the next four years, he got considerable space in the *Post-Dispatch*, including some lengthy depth analyses. One of these, by Washington correspondent George H. Hall, appeared on the editorial title page in February, 1951, accompanied by a strong cartoon drawn by the paper's renowned Daniel R. Fitzpatrick, and under the headline, "The Sinister Alliance Between McCarthy and Taft."[32] It described how the presidential ambitions of both McCarthy and Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft were motivating them to discredit opponents by use of "the big lie method." In 1953, Pulitzer asked managing editor Crowley for a broader study of the McCarthy phenomenon:

> Last night I was challenged as to McCarthy. I was asked the familiar question--granting that McCarthy has been loose in his charges and may well have smeared some innocent people, in short, that his methods have been bad, have not the results on the whole been good? Is not his objective a worthy one and if he had not uncovered so many Communists and so many who take refuge in the Fifth Amendment and refuse to answer questions who would have done so? . . .
>
> I should seriously like to see an article which might well quote the foregoing question and might undertake, with utmost fairness and generosity to McCarthy, to give the answers. . . . I repeatedly run into people who are honestly confused, who unquestionably have been influenced by pro-McCarthyites but who are hungry for information.
>
> I happen to despise McCarthy and his methods and to deplore Eisenhower's failure to come to grips with him, and probably the writer of the piece will feel the same way. I hope, however, that he will take the utmost pains to suppress any such feelings, make the piece coldly objective, even to the extent of giving McCarthy every possible break.[33]

The result was a three-part series by Chief Washington Correspondent Raymond P. Brandt which presented McCarthy's charges one by one and then, in boldface type, reported the outcome in each instance. "For the reader's guidance," Brandt observed in the first article, "this writer, who has reported on national politics for almost 30 years, believes the 'bad' vastly outweighs the 'good' in the McCarthy record."[34] In reviewing the series before publication, Pulitzer suggested only two minor changes in the copy--more detail in one passage and clearer expression in another.[35]

But that done, he did not think the senator needed the incessant editorial drubbing Dilliard was giving him. During the televised Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 which led to McCarthy's censure by the

Senate, Pulitzer again counseled restraint. "Please, please, please lay off the McCarthy hearings. To me--and I believe to the great majority--they are the most terrific bore. Off hand, I should say that one editorial, one letter and one cartoon a week would be about right."[36] In December, after Dilliard ran in the page's "Mirror of Public Opinion" a rather tedious excerpt from the Senate's censure hearings which Pulitzer considered "a total waste of space," he directed the editor "that the words 'McCarthy' or 'McCarthyism' or any oblique reference to either shall not appear on the editorial page without my specific approval in the issues of December 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12."[37]

Earlier in the year, though, Pulitzer had himself suggested some rather intense pressure on McCarthy: "What would you say," he asked Dilliard, "to our tagging him with the name Phoney Joe McCarthy and repeating, repeating and repeating it in editorials and cartoons? It might well catch on." Dilliard was cool to the idea, responding: "It is a question . . . whether he has not done so much damage and may not do so much more in the future that ridicule as a steady treatment would not be sufficient handling."[38] That Pulitzer was firmly anti-McCarthy also comes through in his response to New York textile executive Minot K. Milliken, who sent him a book in April, 1954, praising the senator:

> I am having the McCarthy book you sent me read for me and marked. I fear I will not enjoy it for, as you know, I detest McCarthy as much as I detest Communism and believe his motives are unworthy, his methods thoroughly unAmerican and his early record unspeakable. Nevertheless, thanks for the thought.[39]

McCarthy was not the only focus of difference between Pulitzer and Dilliard on the handling of the communism issue in these years. Other points of friction are found in the correspondence and memoranda of Samuel J. Shelton, a long-time *Post-Dispatch* reporter who became Pulitzer's main assistant and confidant in 1945. Shelton functioned independently of any department in the newspaper and had direct access to Pulitzer. In this capacity, Shelton recorded, Pulitzer consulted him "frequently about conduct of the editorial page and also about the news department, as well as about other departments."[40]

Almost from the beginning of Dilliard's editorship, Shelton recalled, "J. P. had numerous occasions to be dissatisfied with Dilliard's work as editor of the page and as [a] writer of policy editorials," but at the same time considered him an asset to the newspaper. Despite reservations, therefore, Pulitzer evidently concluded that with his own close oversight Dilliard should remain editor of the page. He was the most unhappy with the tone of Dilliard's editorials on communism, sending this to him in late 1952:

> 'THE CLIMATE OF THE POST-DISPATCH EDITORIAL PAGE MUST BE ONE THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SYMPATHIZERS WOULD FIND THOROUGHLY HOSTILE.' This is a MUST rule and everyone who writes or edits editorial page matter, including editorials, cartoons, mirrors, book reviews and letters shall keep it

constantly in mind. . . .

> . . . We have been so intent on not "burning down the house" that we have too often overlooked or appeared to be overlooking the need for "getting rid of the rats." . . .
>
> It goes without saying that the foregoing does NOT mean that we should close our eyes to McCarthyism and the making of reckless charges by anyone. It DOES mean that henceforth we should interest ourselves and show a continuing alert and positive interest in "getting rid of the rats."[41]

A month later he told Dilliard that "in your zeal to protect civil liberties you have a positive obsession on the subject and are always looking for a witchhunter under the bed. In this field I am far from satisfied with your conduct of the page."[42]

In 1953, Pulitzer became increasingly dissatisfied, particularly with Dilliard's handling of a Republican charge that in 1946, then President Truman had promoted Harry Dexter White from assistant secretary of the treasury to become the first American executive director of the International Monetary Fund even though Truman knew at that time of serious accusations that White was a Communist spy and that a secret investigation of the charges was pending. White was removed from the IMF post in 1947. He died in 1948, leaving the allegations against him a matter of controversy.[43] Dilliard's 1953 editorial, Shelton recorded, "was widely construed as an effort to vindicate Harry Truman's loose handling of Dexter White and even as being sympathetic toward White himself in the face of disclosures strongly linking White with Communist espionage." Just the month before that editorial appeared, Pulitzer had written to Dilliard:

> I propose in this memo to give you a lesson in the writing of editorials defending the civil rights of questionable characters. . . . The point of the lesson is that when you are dealing with a man of questionable, or certainly of controversial reputation . . . you should always indicate to the reader that you realize that the subject of the editorial has for years been well to the left and charged with, or suspected of, being definitely sympathetic to the Communist philosophy. In other words, show the reader that you are well aware of all this and then go ahead with all the more effectiveness to defend his civil rights. Do not by omission appear ignorantly to be making a hero of him.[44]

Concluding that this had had little effect, Pulitzer became so exasperated by the end of 1953 that he asked Shelton to come up with some alternatives to the current situation. Shelton suggested two: appoint a new editor or "place someone in charge with supervisory authority, while retaining I. D. as editor." They finally settled, after several conferences with Dilliard at Pulitzer's home, on what they called a "guidance" or "tutelage" arrangement under which Shelton "would exercise an advisory function with reference to the editorial page contents." This was essentially the same means Pulitzer had

adopted to rein in Klyman.

Robert Lasch, who had been a Rhodes Scholar, was chief editorial writer for the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 1950, when he accepted an offer to join the *Post-Dispatch* editorial page staff. He eventually succeeded Dilliard as editor, and viewed at close range much of the Pulitzer-Dilliard conflict. It appeared to him that Dilliard's troubles with Pulitzer "were due to a conflict of personalities. J. P. was certainly more conservative than I. D., but other elements entered in. I suspect that J. P. felt there was a question as to whether he or Irving was running the paper. . . Irving had a way of running his fiercest editorials when J. P. was out of town, and this led to recriminations." The upshot was the "guidance" arrangement which, Lasch explained, worked this way: "All editorial proofs went to Sam and he and Irving would have long telephone conversations, often close to press time, about disputed points. Irving was to have final say, but Sam was to present what he thought was J. P.'s view on specific editorials, both as to content and as to style. This was a pretty clear indication that Irving did not have J. P.'s complete confidence."[45]

Even with the tutelage system in place, Pulitzer remained uneasy about the editorial page, becoming moreso as Shelton came within two years of his retirement. On March 25, 1955, Shelton wrote in his desk diary: "Discussion with J. P. on edit page. His main thought was that J. P. [III]. and I should go on a tour to try to discover a man who in time could take over as brilliantly as did Cobb of the World." Shelton had asked Pulitzer if he thought the arrangement with Dilliard had been worthwhile. "Very much so," the publisher replied. "I am relieved when you are here. [I] wish very much I had a man at the head of the edit page I trust as I do you and R. L. C. [managing editor Crowley]."[46] They planned to discuss the matter more fully later, but never got the chance because Pulitzer died unexpectedly on March 30.

Under Joseph Pulitzer III, who succeeded his father, Shelton continued his editorial page oversight until he retired in early 1957. That October the new editor-publisher told Dilliard he was dissatisfied with his work and wanted him to step down as editor. He asked Lasch, "bearing in mind the hazardous tenure which history has shown,"[47] to succeed Dilliard. Lasch held the job until his own retirement in 1971.

Dilliard left the *Post-Dispatch* in 1960, and was a lecturer at the Salzburg, Austria, Seminar in American Studies that year. In 1963, he accepted an endowed professorship in journalism at Princeton University, a post he held until 1973. He was director of the Illinois Department on Aging in 1974-75 and then retired. He won several national awards and recognitions for his support of civil liberties while at the newspaper and was invited to speak at a number of universities.

How Lasch's editorship might have gone under the second Joseph Pulitzer can only be conjectured, but it seems likely that there would have been some tense times. During the week before his death, Pulitzer asked Shelton, "Won't you try to sober up and steady down Lasch's

expressions on economic subjects?" He mentioned three editorials, including one criticizing Monsanto president Edgar Queeny in a "sarcastic and almost contemptuous" way. "Lasch's tone of fairness and sincerity and moderation is very much more impressive in his conversation than it is in his editorial expressions," he observed. "It hurts me to think that we are so often right in our point of view but so often wrong--very wrong--in our expression."[48]

CONCLUSION

"It is an interesting speculation . . . whether my editorship would have been any smoother than Irving's under J. P., had he lived," Lasch commented in 1987. "If he really intended to send Sam on a national hunt for a replacement, perhaps he had already counted me out."[49] Lasch's assessment of Pulitzer during the period considered here was that "J. P. was never a McCarthyite. He would hardly have stood for the P-D's supporting Stevenson over Eisenhower in 1952 had he been one. But he did share some of the concern over Communism at that period. He and Sam both supported the Smith Act outlawing Communism." More broadly, Lasch summarized the editor-publisher's approach to his job along the lines reflected in this paper: "I had the feeling that he took the famous 'platform' seriously and wanted the paper to be generally a little left of center even though he himself might be farther right. It was my impression that he wished to be relieved of day-to-day supervision of the page by a staff he could trust to keep the paper in line with its tradition of independent liberalism."[50]

As with most human endeavors, he appears to have achieved only approximate success. The evidence presented here makes it appear plausible that without the resistance of such strong-willed lieutenants as Klyman and Dilliard, Pulitzer might well have committed the *Post-Dispatch* to a more stridently anti-communist stance. In all probability, the issue would have gotten less editorial attention in the paper. Yet at the same time, there is little question that while he was open to argument, Pulitzer's was the last word on the matter--both personally and by delegated authority--throughout the 1940 to 1955 period. It is clear that overall he chose to use his power in a temperate way. More than anything else, he seemed interested in giving a balanced presentation of this emotionally supercharged issue. That appears to be why, for example, that while he disliked McCarthy and said so, he thought it was wrong to dismiss the widespread concern the senator had tapped. Similarly, he could not ignore Klyman's political predisposition.

How far apart he was from the positions of Klyman and Dilliard it is impossible to say for certain, but it was plainly a closer call with Dilliard than with the collectivistic Klyman. Consistent with Lasch's view, the ideological distance between Pulitzer and Dilliard does not seem great. This is supported in a memorandum Pulitzer wrote Dilliard in late 1951:

> I am seriously tempted somehow to nail the following to

the masthead and to run it permanently:

> "If there is any principle of the constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other it is the principle of free thought--not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate."[51]

This was never done, probably because, as Pulitzer anticipated in the memo, the statement would "seem to subordinate the platform." Still, the proposal is indicative of a commitment much like Dilliard's; the differences, while more than superficial, had to do with approach, emphasis and style of expression--differences of degree. With Klyman, the differences were of both kind and degree. In Pulitzer's relationship with both men it is revealing and impressive to see the concentration with which those differences were monitored and debated. The result, this paper suggests, is that it was through an almost continuous tug and pull process rather than any kind of fixed doctrinal response that the *Post-Dispatch* developed its handling of this issue of longstanding--and continuing--significance. As for advancing the causes of freedom and equity in journalism, all three players deserve a measure of credit, but particularly the editor-publisher, who could have dictated a more narrowly rigid course than he chose.

Notes for "The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* Debate Over Communism, 1940-1955"

1. John Gunther, Inside U. S. A., (New York: Harper and Row, 1947), pp. 351-353.

2. In noting the 50th anniversary of the *Post-Dispatch* in 1928, *The Nation* observed that "the *Post-Dispatch* stands second to no other newspaper in this country as a liberal news-daily, free and unfettered, able to say what it thinks without fear or favor. That the New York *Times* prints a greater volume of news is true; in nearly every other respect it is inferior, especially in its editorial page. The *Sun* and *Evening Sun* of Baltimore rank next to the *Post-Dispatch* in fearlessness, cleanliness, intelligent news-gathering, tolerance, liberalism, and keen editorial comment." *The Nation*, Dec. 19, 1928, p. 675. See also: Julian S. Rammelkamp, Pulitzer's Post-Dispatch, 1878-1883, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1967); James W. Markham, Bovard of the Post-Dispatch, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954); Edwin and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 5th edition, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984); Harry Wilensky and Dale Singer, The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, (booklet, 1988); Jack Alexander, "The Last Shall Be First," *Saturday Evening Post*, Jan. 14, 1939, pp. 5-7 ff.; and Roger Butterfield, "The St. Louis Post-Dispatch--Pulitzer's Prize," *Collier's*, Dec. 16, 1950, p. 25 ff.

3. Interview with Baumhoff, Aug. 12, 1983, Carmel, Calif.

4. Clipping, "Donkey and Elephant," undated, Papers of Joseph Pulitzer II, Library of Congress, microfilm copy, reel 72, frame 566. Hereafter, materials from this source are identified by the names of the persons involved and the reel and frame numbers.

5. Julius H. Klyman, "Leon Trotsky," in *Dictators and Democrats*, ed. by Lawrence Fernsworth, (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1941), p. 213.

6. JHK to JPII, Feb. 14, 1944, loc. cit.

7. JPII to BHR, Feb. 5, 1945, 73-120. In its entirety, the *Post-Dispatch* Platform, written in 1907 by the founding Joseph Pulitzer, reads: "I know my retirement will make no difference in its cardinal principles, that it will always fight for progress and reform, never tolerate injustice or corruption, always fight demagogues of all parties, never belong to any party, always oppose privileged classes and public plunderers, never lack sympathy with the poor, always remain devoted to the public welfare, never be satisfied with merely printing news, always be drastically independent, never afraid to attack wrong, whether by predatory plutocracy or predatory poverty."

8. JPII to JHK, April 14, 1946, 73-115.

9. JPII to JHK, Jan. 17, 1947, 73-82.

10. JPII to BHR, May 9, 1947, 773-55.

11. JPII to BHR, Nov. 18, 1947, 73-170.

12. JHK to JPII, July 29, 1949, 73-233.

13. JHK to JPII, March 21, 1951, 72-680.

14. RLC to JPII, March 30, 1953, 72-615.

15. JPIII to JPII, March 10, 1953, 72-617.

16. *Time*, July 4, 1949, p. 49.

17. ID to JPII, April 5, 1951, 56-492; Interview with Irving Dilliard, April 28, 1984, Collinsville, Ill.

18. JPII to RC, Jan. 9,. 1943, 57-104.

19. RC to JPII, Jan. 12, 1943, 57-099. In the first case, *Minersville School District* v. *Gobitis*, 310 U. S. 586 (1940), the Court voted 8 to 1 in favor of the compulsory salute. This was reversed, 6 to 3, in *West Virginia State Board of Education* v. *Barnette*, 319 U. S. 624 (1943).

20. JPII to ID, Dec. 19, 1949, 52-383.

21. *Globe-Democrat*, May 2, 1946; JPII to JPIII, Aug. 2, 1950, 38-636.

22. *Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 1, 1952.

23. *Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 16, 1949.

24. ID to JPII, April 5, 1951, loc. cit.

25. JPII to SS, Feb. 2, 1954, 53-502.

26. *Post-Dispatch*, June 5, 1951.

27. JPII to ID, July 23, 1951, 55-138.

28. JPII to ID, Feb. 24, 1950, 54-538.

29. *Yates* v. *United States*, 354 U. S. 298 (1957).

30. JPII to ID, March 13, 1950, 58-188.

31. JPII to ID, March 15, 1950, 54-537.

32. *Post-Dispatch*, Feb. 18, 1951.

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33. JPII to RLC, July 7, 1953, 58-156.

34. *Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 23, 1953.

35. JPII to RLC, July 25, 1953, 58-156.

36. JPII to ID, April 30, 1954, 58-113.

37. JPII to ID, Dec. 6, 1954, 58-107.

38. JPII to ID, March 5; ID to JPII, March 11, 1954, 58-124; 118.

39. JPII to Minot K. Milliken, April 26, 1954, 58-114.

40. SS to JPIII, Jan. 2, 1957, P-D.

41. JPII to ID, Nov. 19, 1952, 55-92.

42. JPII to ID, Dec. 20, 1952, 55-84.

43. David Rees, Harry Dexter White: A Study in Paradox, (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973), pp. 10-11, 377.

44. JPII to ID, Oct. 30, 1953, 53-262.

45. Robert Lasch to author, May 18, 1985.

46. SS to JPIII, Jan. 2, 1957, loc. cit.

47. "Memo for file," JPIII, Oct. 1, 1957, Files of Joseph Pulitzer III, *Post-Dispatch*.

48. JPII to SS, March 24, 1955, 75-265.

49. RL to author Aug. 4, 1987.

50. RL to author, May 18, 1987.

51. JPII to ID, Nov. 9, 1951, 53-3.